



*RI Department of Education
in Collaboration with the
RI Department of Health*

Sexual Behavior Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 1997 and 2001

This summary presents selected information on sexual behaviors that affect health risks among Rhode Island adolescents, based on results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in over 50 participating states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 and 2001 the YRBS was administered to 1,528 and 1,396 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students, respectively, in grades 9 through 12. With response rates of 60% in 1997 and 63% in 2001, the results are representative of all public high school students statewide. Survey findings from both years can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors within this population.

For additional information contact Donald Perry, Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-7628 or Linda Nightingale Greenwood, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2364.

KEY FINDINGS

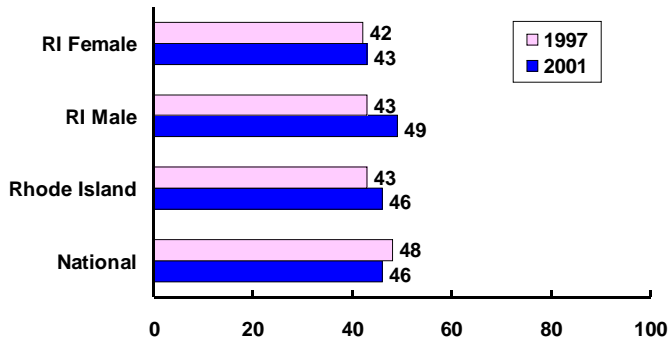
- ✓ In 2001, 46% of Rhode Island high school students reported having had sexual intercourse in their lifetime as compared to 43% in 1997. The percentage of students having sexual intercourse increased substantially by grade, from 34% among 9th graders to 62% among 12th graders in 2001. More than a third of students had sex during the past 3 months (i.e., recently active) in 2001. 38% of males reported being recently sexually active in 2001 compared to 28% in 1997, while just over one-third of females in both years reported having sex in the past 3 months. The proportion of students who were recently sexually active increased markedly across grade levels for both 1997 and 2001, culminating in a rate of approximately 50% among Rhode Island 12th graders.
 - ✓ 14% of Rhode Island students in 2001 reported having sexual intercourse with four or more people during their lifetime. This rate was the same as the national figure. In addition, 7% of students in Rhode Island as well as nationwide reported having sex for the first time before age 13.
 - ✓ In 2001, 56% of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months reported that they used a condom and 17% reported using birth control pills during their last sexual intercourse. This was similar to both national figures for 2001 as well as 1997 Rhode Island data.
 - ✓ 27% of students in 2001 drank alcohol or used drugs before their last sexual intercourse, with males far exceeding females in their use of these substances, at 37% versus 17%. This marks an apparent decline in rates compared to 1997, particularly among females.
 - ✓ 6% of Rhode Island high school students in the 2001 survey had ever been pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant, which is consistent with 1997 results as well as national figures.
 - ✓ In 2001, 90% of students reported that they had been taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school, a significant decline from the 95% reported in 1997.
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Sexual Behavior

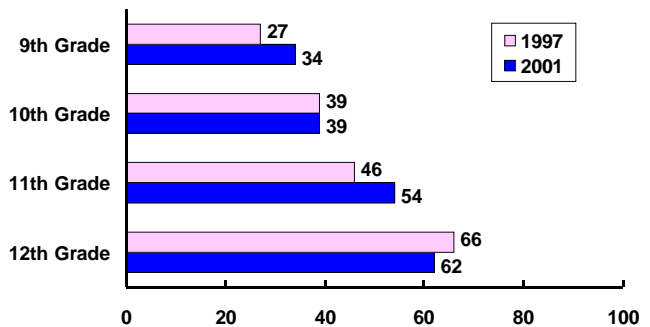
Risk Behavior: Sexual activity, recent sexual behavior, multiple partners, and early sexual activity

Rationale: Age at first intercourse, recent sexual behavior, and number of sexual partners is associated with increased risk for unwanted pregnancy and other sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection.

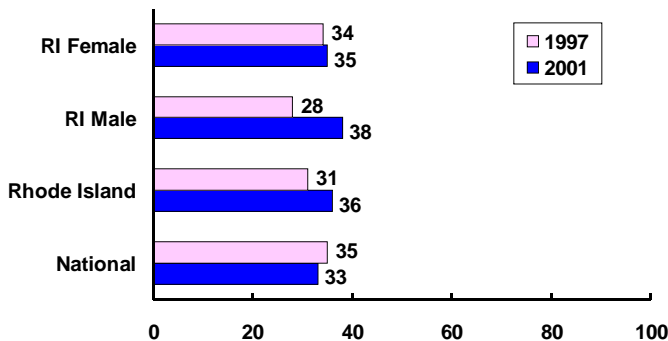
Percentage of students who ever had sexual intercourse



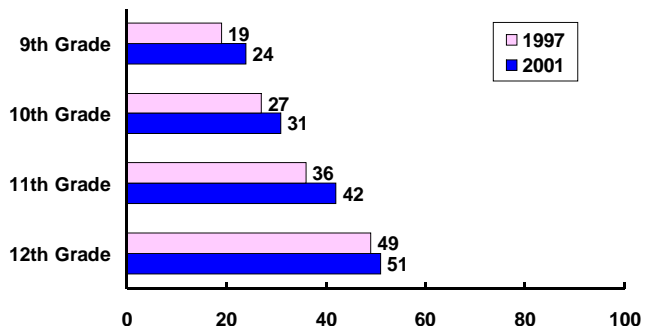
Percentage of students who ever had sexual intercourse – by grade level



Percentage of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months

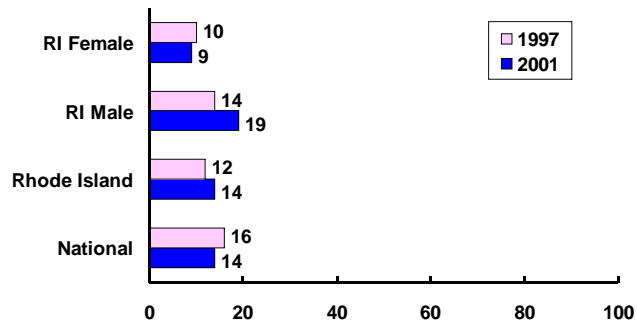


Percentage of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months by grade level

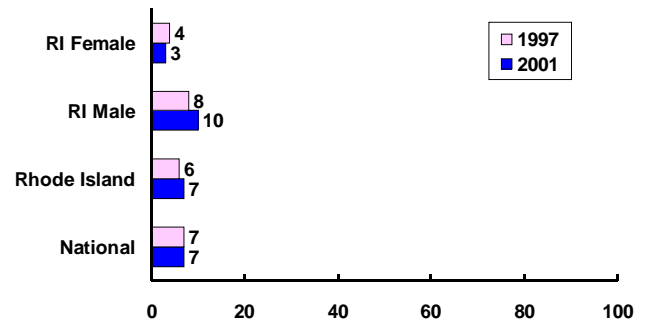


Sexual Behavior

Percentage of students who had sexual intercourse with 4 or more people during their lifetime



Percentage of students having sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13

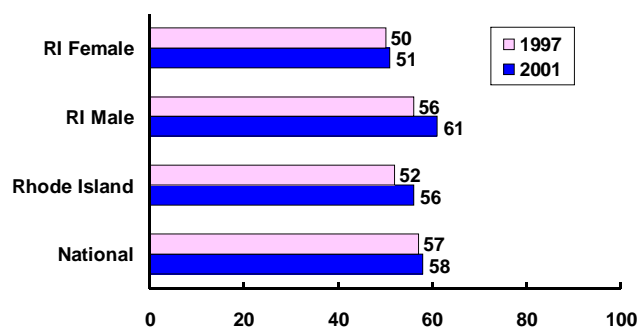


Sexual Behavior

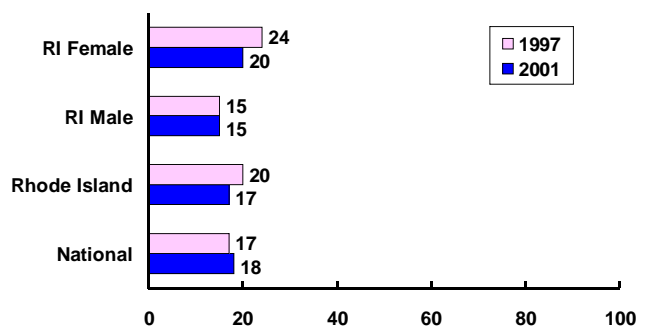
Risk Behavior: Unprotected sexual intercourse and unintended pregnancy

Rationale: Pregnancies that occur during adolescence place both mothers and infants at risk for lifelong social and economic disadvantages. In 1995, almost one million teenage girls in the United States became pregnant and just over 243,000 teenagers obtained an abortion. Nationally, sixty-six percent of all births among teenagers are the result of unintended pregnancy.

Of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, the percentage who used a condom during last sexual intercourse

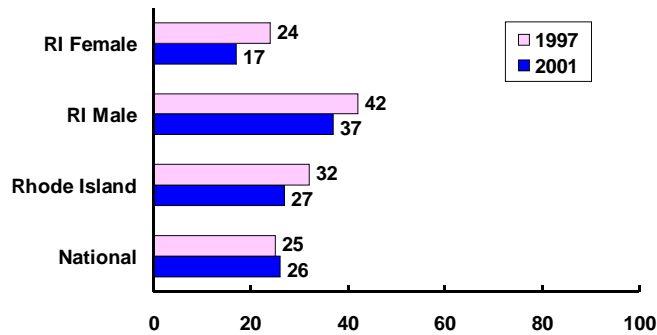


Of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, the percentage who used birth control pills during last sexual intercourse

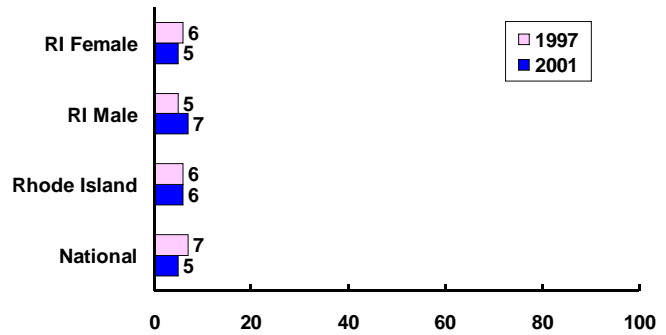


Sexual Behavior

Of students who had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months, the percentage who drank alcohol or used drugs before the last sexual intercourse



Percentage of students having ever been pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant



Sexual Behavior

Risk Behavior: Lack of HIV/AIDS education

Rationale: Between 1990 and 1995, AIDS incidence among people 13 to 25 years old rose nearly 20 percent nationally. In 2000, 1,688 young people (ages 13 to 24) were reported with AIDS, bringing the cumulative total to 31,293 cases of AIDS in this age group. In 2000, 86 percent of high schools required HIV prevention education. AIDS is the 9th leading cause of death for youth aged 15-25.

Percentage of students who were ever taught about AIDS or HIV infection in school

